

**A Response to criticisms of the crisis bills and one-time funding
HB 130, 131 and 132**

We shouldn't be taking on new projects in hard economic times.

Anyone who has been hearing a version of this argument for the last 15 years or so could reasonably conclude that it will never be the right time to fund these services.

But you can't buy back lost time. The lives we could have saved, both literally and figuratively, during this biennium cannot be saved in the next one.

Hard times aside, this is a pretty amazing opportunity for policy makers: an infusion of one-time federal dollars, the focused efforts of the interim committee, the opening of dozens of new community psychiatric beds during 2009, and the immense good will and anticipation around the state are a foundation for success.

We can't use one-time money to fund services.

The \$4 million appropriation in HB 645 is entitled "community crisis services demonstration grant." As the Department testified, there's a lot we don't know about the cost of providing this level of community service to the uninsured. For instance, we don't know how many people will use diversion beds and don't know whether having more emergency detention beds will actually increase or decrease State Hospital admissions. We will only find out by starting to do it. The demonstration grant will provide data and experience for lawmakers to consider in 2011, without committing the state to any particular level of funding or category of funding over the long term.

We don't have enough data and need to analyze costs first.

That's why we need the demonstration grant.

\$4 million is not enough money.

We don't really know how much is enough. We know this is enough to get started. If implementation will really be as difficult as the Department predicts, then \$4 million over the biennium may be too much.

September 9th is too soon to complete implementation of HB 132, the diversion bill.

Agreed. This can be amended to a more realistic date.

It will take a lot of time to educate lawyers, judges and other community partners.

There is an immense amount of community good will and hope accompanying these bills, from hospitals and mental health providers, consumers and advocates, local leadership and the law enforcement community. Everyone is prepared to work together to make the demonstration grant succeed.

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Who supports HB 130, 131 and 132, and the crisis services demonstration project?

Central Service Area Authority

Disability Rights Montana

Montana Children's Initiative

Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

Western Montana Mental Health Center

Eastern Montana Mental Health Center

The Center for Mental Health

The League of Women Voters

Montana County Attorneys Association

Montana Licensed Professional Counselors

Montana Mental Health Association

Montana Sheriff's and Peace Officers Association

National Association of Social Workers, MT Chapter

Rocky Mountain Development Council